

# Welcome on Board

## Welcome to the Conservation District Board of Directors

Welcome to your new job as a member of the Conservation District Board of Directors. It is distinctly an honor to be elected to the District board. You'll set the direction for a very important organization in the county. By electing you, your peers have said they believe you have the skills to do that.

You have three major challenges facing you as a board member. The first is to do the task of governing your Conservation District. You'll plan, monitor things like finance and services, evaluate the progress of the District, and a hundred other things to keep this organization viable and moving.

The second is assisting other board members and partners in setting the vision for your Conservation District.

But the third major task is equally important. You have to become part of the District board team, and keep the team functioning at optimum level. If you and other board members don't do a good job of building and maintaining your skills of teamwork and good boardsmanship, you'll not be able to accomplish the first task —governing the Conservation District.

## What You'll Need to Know First

As you gain experience on the District board, you will continue to learn facts, statistics, history, procedures, and a thousand others things. But first things first:

1. **Get to know the other folks who serve on the District board with you** — not just their names, but who they really are. Where do they live? What are their occupations? Do they have families? What are their real interests and concerns? What motivates them to serve on the board?
2. **Get to know the Administrator/Executive Director**, the other part of the District board team. There must be a high level of trust between those who govern and the person they have chosen to manage.
3. **Learn where to go for answers to your questions.** Your best defense against being totally lost at this early stage of your term is to know the people and resources to give your answers to the tough questions quickly. The Administrator/ Executive Director, and fellow board members are your best guides to the ways and means of the Conservation District.
4. **Learn to learn.** Learning the job of boardsmanship is a never-ending task. Attend state and national conferences, take part in boardsmanship workshops, read pertinent literature. Learn that this job deserves your very best effort. You come to the District board as an amateur, but you must do the job in the most professional manner possible.

## **How Not To Begin Your Career as a Member of the District Board**

If you are looking for ways to freeze yourself out of the District board team, here are a few suggestions that will guarantee that:

- √ Talk too much and listen too little
- √ Publicly criticize a District board decision you did not support
- √ Ignore advice from fellow board members
- √ Show that you have all the answers for every issue
- √ Refuse to change your mind on any issue, no matter what the evidence
- √ Refuse to compromise
- √ Leak information from a closed District board session
- √ Fail to prepare for board meetings
- √ Ridicule board decisions made before you were elected to the board